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"The Strongest Memory is Weaker than the Weakest Ink."

FRIDAY, JANUARY 17, 1941.

Premier King's Blunder

No doubt many reasons will be assigned for the failure of the Ottawa conference on Dominion-Provincial relations. To date the best commentary has been supplied by Hon. R. B. Hanson, who says the conference failed, not because of anything the Conservative party had done (it was not represented at all) but because of lack of national leadership and because of a subversive element within the Liberal party.

Mr. Hanson had previously expressed his sincere hope that the conference might achieve some beneficial result. He scrupulously refrained, as did every provincial Conservative leader, from any adverse comment which might embarrass Prime Minister King in his efforts to obtain co-operation. But it was "no go." The conference was foredoomed to failure.

This Mr. King should have known. He showed lamentable lack of judgment as well as lack of leadership, which may have serious repercussions. How will Wednesday's exhibition within the ranks of the Liberal party—the only party represented in Canada's war cabinet—be interpreted in enemy countries, or even in Great Britain and by our neighbors to the South? It should have been an easy matter for the Prime Minister to have ascertained in advance the views of the respective provincial governments. The tone of the press throughout Canada should have warned him. The public mind was not concerned with political discussions or conferences, but with how best to aid Britain in this hour of trial.

Mr. King's attempt to camouflage the Sirois report as a war measure, when its adoption would have meant revision of our whole Constitution, was singularly inconsistent with his pre-election appeal, not to "change horses in midstream." How much more dangerous than changing horses in midstream, or governments in war time, would it be to embark at this crisis on radical constitutional changes, involving a whole new setup of federal-provincial relations!

Gasoline Revenues

It has been intimated by Finance Minister Ilsley that failing readjustment of Canada's taxation system as recommended by the Sirois Commission, drastic measures may have to be taken by the Dominion Government in the way of invading provincial taxation fields. He also stated that in addition the Dominion might have to ration gasoline, which would curtail provincial revenues from car licenses and gasoline taxes.

On this point Premier Pattullo of British Columbia asked Mr. Ilsley: "Will my hon. friend guarantee that there will be no rationing of gasoline if the report is implemented?"

Mr. Ilsley: "I did not say that, I said that we would have to compensate in that event."

Premier Pattullo: "Where are you going to get the money?"

It is not recorded that Mr. Ilsley made any reply to this question. Yet it would seem to go to the root of the matter. If implementation of the Sirois report was necessary as a wartime measure (which was Premier King's excuse for calling the conference at this time) it was because of the assurance it held out of financial stability. Wherein would our stability lie? In the case of Prince Edward Island, the report says: *"The sources of revenue which would remain with the Province are peculiarly stable since they comprise gasoline, automobile and land taxes, while the two items most subject to fluctuations, viz., public domain revenue and revenue from liquor control, are of negligible importance as compared with those of other provinces."*

Rationing of gasoline as a war measure would thus completely upset the Sirois plan so far as we are concerned. We would be left with only one "stable" source of revenue, that of land taxes. How the Dominion Government would be able to compensate us in that event is now an academic question, since the conference has come to nothing; but it would have been interesting to have had Mr. Ilsley elucidate this point.

A Farmer's Viewpoint

A farmer writing in the Gazette says: "I would like to draw your attention to a few points generally overlooked in the discussion on the fixing of a maximum butter price. First, the western farmers are nearly ruined with their unsaleable record crop of grain, the lower grades of which are used for mill feeds for Eastern Canada and United States. Now, here is a great mystery. The price of mill feeds has risen steadily for the last two years. Who gets it? Western farmers can't sell their grain. Eastern farmers, who have to use this mill feed to supplement home-grown feeds, are to have a maximum price put on butter—not on mill feed, oh no! It is generally well known that Eastern dairy farmers have had a desperate time trying to stay on their farms. They have done so because no one else wants the farms and because farmers will get along on less than anyone else to keep their farms. We farmers are willing to pay extra taxes, we are willing for our boys to go overseas, we are anxious to do our part in the war—but we do not want to be the goats. There are many middlemen who will unload storage butter when the market goes up. There are powerful grain companies who will pocket the spread of price in feed—and make a big noise as they turn over a fat cheque to this or that war fund. But our all-powerful government could surely, if it had the will, put its heavy foot down on these lads as well as on the farmers. There could be a limit to the turnover in storage butter prices, to the spread on mill-feed, and then the butter price would take care of itself, the Western farmers could sell more grain to the East, to the advantage of both. This wild talk of butter being rationed in Canada would drop. From the farmer's viewpoint the government is sacrificing the farmer to protect the grain companies and the middlemen."

In The Mediterranean

The result of last Friday's battle in the Mediterranean between British warships and aircraft of the fleet air arm, on the one hand, and German dive bombers aided by some Italian aircraft and surface boats, on the other, is thus summed up by a Canadian Press writer:

Britain lost a fine cruiser, the four-year-old 9,100-ton Southampton; and the modern aircraft carrier Illustrious was damaged by bomb hits or near misses but reached port safely. The destroyer Gallant was damaged but made port.

The credit side had these important items:—

The British fleet successfully pushed a convoy of apparently tremendous importance thruogh the strait between Sicily and Tunis, and on to Greece.

The enemy lost at least 12 aircraft in the actual attack; then Sunday night the Royal Air Force visited the base from which the German dive bombers operate, Catania in Sicily, and destroyed or severely damaged between 30 and 40 aircraft on the ground.

An Italian destroyer was sunk at the scene of the engagement. The British submarine Pandora sank two Italian supply boats seeking to sneak across to Libya to land materials for Marshal Graziani's army.

Appearance of the Nazi dive bombers over the Mediterranean, taking over the task at which the Italians had hopelessly failed—that of dividing the Mediterranean by preventing Britain from using the Sicilian Strait—presented a threat which Britain was prepared to meet.

— EDITORIAL NOTES —

The state of our agricultural development demands more practical attention than is being given it by bureaucrats.

* * * *

The Commonwealth Staff at the Airport are to play hosts to the British guest children this afternoon.

* * * *

"And they all came back, every blessed one of 'em, as though they'd got the sack, they all came back, sadder and wiser them"—the old saw has its modern application.

* * * *

Acting Premier Dennis has the advantage of two acting attorneys-general, neither of whom has a seat in the Legislature. Mr. Dennis has been long in office, but has usually been passed over by Mr. Campbell when requiring a deputy, Messrs. LePage, McIntyre and Wright having had the preference. Everything comes to him who waits.

* * * *

A committee of volunteers has been formed among Western Union employes in New York City to co-operate with the British War Relief Society in efforts to alleviate the suffering of the people in the wartorn British Isles. Funds will be raised through donations of thousands of Western Union employes, for the purchase of rolling kitchens. The committee also is seeking clothing, knitted articles and tin foil.

* * * *

Mr. R. G. Loughlin, bond broker, Fredericton, N.B., has been appointed provincial director of the National War Savings Committees of New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island as a full time job. He was formerly in the employment of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, and served for a time in the Charlottetown office. He has been in company with Mr. J. O. McKenzie, Saint John, with an office at Fredericton as a bond dealer since 1932.

* * * *

Mr. John Patterson, director of Meteorological Services of Canada, reports that it probably will not be long until a five-day weather forecast will be an established routine for a meteorological service. Five-day forecasts now are being tried out experimentally and, he predicted, in the distant future it might be possible to forecast weather conditions for a year in advance. At present, general forecasts are for 36-48 hours.

* * * *

Farmers are no farther ahead in "the pegging" controversy than they were before the conference with Mr. Gardiner. The Wartime Prices and Trade Board still has authority to set maximum prices for butter, Mr. Gardiner reported after the London (Ont.) conference. The Canadian Press erroneously reported Mr. Gardiner as saying to the conference of Ontario farmers that control of butter prices had been taken from the board. Mr. Gardiner said that authority to settle minimum prices for butter had been settled in the Dairy Supply Board, which would take this action soon. It is another case of "jam yesterday, jam tomorrow, but never jam today."

* * * *

Benjamin Franklin, American statesman, diplomat and author, born this date, 1706; was one of the heroes of the War of Independence; began life as a working printer in Boston; entirely self-taught; established in Philadelphia one of the earliest circulation libraries; appointed postmaster, and organized the first police force and fire brigade in the colonies; founded the Academy which became the University of Philadelphia; member of the General Assembly for 13 years; his famous experiment proving the identity of lightning and electricity made in June 1752; was London agent of Massachusetts, Maryland and Georgia; induced France to make an alliance with the revolted colonies; during his life time received many literary distinctions, and published several political pamphlets and writings on economics; his many-sided genius was eminently practical, and in science and politics he was an altruist.

NOTES BY THE WAY

The last ten years have been trying ones. There has been suffering enough, Heaven knows. And yet—the average resident of North America is better off today than he has ever been. That is the deliberate conclusion of one competent economist. — Quebec Chronicle-Telegraph.

I cannot pretend that this quotation is from a new book—it is from quite an old one, the "Recollections" of Dr. Forbes Winslow—but it has some merit none the less: "On the completion of his first year of study he (the writer's brother) was bitten by a mad dog whilst playing in a cricket match, and being apprehensive of the result he suddenly threw up medicine and began to read for holy orders." — London Spectator.

The Italians are on the defensive in Libya and Albania, their morale at home still further shaken, their influence within the Axis all but ruined. Not the least encouraging aspect of the British success is the fact that it was won by an army of free allies—an army of British, New Zealanders, Australians, Free French and others, leagued together,, for the liberation of Europe. In this first convincing proof of what an army of free men can do, the British may yet have given the world a foretaste of the greater deliverance to come. — New York Times.

With Clarence D. Howe, Dominion Minister of Munitions and Supply, at present in England, the Government at Ottawa can soon be directly informed on the prospective demands ahead of Canada to make up for the damage done by the German air war on British industrial towns. The Minister should be in a better position to advise on the possibility of moving certain British industries to Canada, after they have been bombed, rather than try to rebuild the factories where they can be bombed over and over again. Canada may well consider the possibility of finding the necessary financial credit to build more new factories. They could perhaps be loaned or leased to British firms, with experienced British workers to provide the skilled craftsmanship. There would be mutual benefit in the transference of bombed industries to this side of the Atlantic Ocean where they would continue to be within the British family of nations. Out of this war, the British Commonwealth has to emerge more unified along economic lines. The process of re-building to bring co-operation more into the Commonwealth cannot begin too soon. It has never been more urgently needed than at this very time. — Ottawa Citizen.

The important thing to remember about the two earthquakes that have shaken New England, one Friday and the other yesterday, is that the seismologists both at Weston and at Harvard insist that "there is nothing to worry about." It happens that New England's subterranean regions are lacking the "fault" that has in the past been responsible for the violent destructive quakes on the Pacific Coast. This fault, of which New England, we are told, is free, is a kind of fissure or huge crack over a vast portion of the rocky sub-strata, so that one mighty section "skids" against the other causing the remarkable movement that brings such great destruction on the surface. But in New England, the geologists say there is reason to believe that no such fault exists and that we have more of a solid or monolithic condition underneath our soil, the presumption being that if such a condition had existed here we'd have known it long before this. On other points, as to the cause precisely of the disturbance, or its fundamental background the geologists are disinclined to make speculations since it may be due either to a relaxation of rock structures below the surface of the earth after ice-age pressures, or still further unknown causes. This, they say, is a mystery to be cleared up as the result of the collection of data which is now enthusiastically in process. — Boston Post.

"What are the feelings of a man of culture and refinement when he drops bombs on an enemy country?" This was the question put by a representative of the Associated Press of America in Berlin to a German university graduate who, after a career in journalism and service as a government official, is now in the crew of a German bomber. A married man with a family, this German had come in contact with people of many nations and confessed to liking the British as individuals. His answer to the American was that bombing was the carrying out of a purely military command, the discharge of which brought relief. "There is so much anger stored up in us that the command to start on a bombing raid evokes cheers and sighs of relief," he added. "We drop bombs not because we want to kill English people, but because we feel somehow that the best way to end the war quickly is to cause just as much destruction as possible." The culture and refinement of this man are subordinate to a blind obedience to orders. Fed on racial principles in a system which admits of no free thought, he can combine a love of his own family with a complete disregard for the lives of English women and children simply because his Fuehrer wills it. — Belfast Telegraph.

I am continually asked if I think we can win through. A great many problems have to be overcome. A great many dangers have to be faced. Suffering and tribulation are certain, but I see the situation in sharp contract to those nights in early June, when it was touch and go whether we lost the whole of the B.E.F., when even friendly observers doubted our ability to stand the strain. Contrary to the gloomy anticipation and fears of those days, the Battle of Britain is not proceeding according to Hitler's plan, and given the continuance of unity and endurance, we cannot be beaten. — A. V. Alexander in United Empire.

"I wonder," said a friend who should know, "if we are doing enough to exploit Hitler's perplexities and to make it clear that he has been hesitating for some time whether to sell France to Italy or Italy to France, and has lately been inclining to doublecross his Italian allies in the hopes of getting more out of France in the way of naval support? He is, in fact, at the present moment inclined to drop the prey for the shadow, as in the fable. In one way at least he is in an awkward position, because if he lets his Italian jackal collapse, this own reputation will collapse too. If, on the other hand, he revives the jackal will then revive its claim on the carcass of France with which Hitler is trying to do a deal while being still uncertain how far to apply the butcher's knife. What therefore, is he going to do? The only thing that can be safely said is that he simply must do the dirty somewhere." — London New Statesman.

Italy Seethes with Discontent

(Winnipeg Free Press)

Feeble and faint was the voice of forty million Italian people scarcely to be heard by those who would listen. But it was an insistent voice. It was the voice of the people. Those who visited this country, who had ears to hear, heard of that voice even though it was muffled behind the Fascist gag which Mussolini and his Black Shirts had imposed upon the land.

After Mussolini entered the war the voice became vocal and louder. Since the amazing Greeks have trounced the Duce's Albanian legions the voice has become so loud that even the deaf can hear it. Since the arrival of the wounded from Albania the women of Italy are speaking in chorus. The voice now shouting openly and loudly, tells of hatred and dissatisfaction among the middle and upper classes, of contempt for the rabble Black Shirts by the aristocracy, of poverty and distress among the peasants and farmers, and of disappointment and disillusionment among the nation as a whole as a result of the military and economic failure of wars, wars and wars.

The whole of Italy today is like a military camp, "bristling" with soldiers of all ages and types, dressed in uniforms which range from the sombre black of the official Fascist Guard to the rather "Puritanian" cocked hats and large swords of the military police. But wherever you go you never find a martial air on the part of the people, either in or out of uniform. The people behave as though Italy had signed an armistice and any hour an invading army would march in.

The Black Shirts no longer march through the streets with the stride of the German goose-step.

Only those in black shirts are seen with newspapers. Pamphlets and posters printed in cellar and attic secret propaganda thives have a larger circulation than Fascist-dominated sheets.

It is impossible to estimate the damage wrought by British bombings. According to official statements British bombs are fascinated by small farm houses and hospitals. Of course no one believes this.

Intercourse between cities is absolutely prohibited, but stray stragglers, laboring men, who reach Rome from bombed areas, tell harrowing stories of the devastation wrought by British bombers in Italy's industrial region.

The authorities loudly deny that British bombings have destroyed Italian industrial works, but the tens of thousands of skilled and unskilled unemployed that are now actually glutting the streets are mute evidences of the widespread havoc inflicted upon the land.

The Poets' Corner

TO A SPARROW

Because you have no fear to mingle
Wings with those of greater part
So like me, with song I single
Your sweet impudence of heart.

And when prouder feathers go where
Summer holds her leafy show,
You still come to us from nowhere
Like gray leaves across the snow.

In back ways where odd and end go
To your meals you drop down sure,
Knowing every broken window
Of the hospitable poor.

There is no bird half so harmless,
None so sweetly rude as you,
None so common and so charmless,
None of virtues nude as you.

But for all your faults I love you,
For you linger with us still,
Though the wintry winds reprove you,
And the snow is on the hill.

—Francis Ledwidge.

PUBLIC FORUM

This column is open for the discussion by correspondents of questions of interest. The Charlottetown Guardian does not necessarily endorse the opinions of correspondents.

HOG PRICES

Sir,—At a recent Director's meeting of the Livestock Marketing Board, Mr. J. A. Gillies, the manager, reported the increased volume of hogs shipped from Hunter River during seven months of 1940 as compared with seven months of 1939. He did not reveal, according to press reports just how he was able, in 1940, to meet the competition at Hunter River which he was unable to meet in 1939.

He might have explained that at Hunter River as high as 75 cents a hundred pounds more was paid at certain times than had previously been paid according to market values. This extra 75 cents came either from the pockets of farmers at other centres or from a packer. Perhaps this explains why the unconstitutional step was taken of paying the farmers here through the Board's representative rather than directly by cheque as formerly, and as at other points.

I think the above may explain the Board's increase of business at Hunter River.

I am, Sir, etc.,
ERNEST HOUSTON,
Hunter River.

Since the Greek war, the authorities being too preoccupied with attempts to return the Italian wounded from Albania, the secret police have ceased to be as vigilant and as efficient as in former days. As a result, the anti-Fascists are having a real Roman holiday. Their propaganda machinery is functioning twenty-four hours a day.

The people of Rome learned a few days ago that out of the 75,000 Italians sent to Abyssinia to be settled there permanently, over sixty thousand of them have escaped to Egypt and other neighboring African regions, and that thousands of them have put themselves at the disposal of Mussolini's enemies. It is commonly believed in Rome that soon there will be an Abyssinian rebellion against Mussolini and that the revolt will be led by the Italians in these regions.

It is estimated that there are more than 80,000 Italian laborers and big and small business men in Egypt. These sent weekly and monthly allowances to their families and relatives in Italy. But since Italy entered the war against Britain their Italian relatives are receiving pathetic letters. They say that as the Greeks and the British control the big and small businesses of the country of Egypt the Italians are now looked upon as a race of pariahs by even the native Arabs. Reports are also coming in private letters telling how thousands of Italians in Egypt and Palestine have become destitute.

Letters coming from the United States of America are telling how the Italians are now ashamed to tell their neighbors they are Italians because of Mussolini's repeated perfidies. They also resent the warning of Ovra (the Italian Gestapo) that unless they toe the line and plot on behalf of Fascism their relatives in Italy will suffer.

Since Mussolini entered the war on the side of Germany his popularity has been waning. Even the Black Shirters are divided. Street fights among them are now common sights. The former Communists who became Fascists and donned black shirts to terrorize small business men and peasants have returned to their former paths, as Moscow would have them. Marshal Balbo, who was reported to have been shot while flying his machine, was the one man in Italy whom Mussolini feared the most as a possible rival. Balbo's followers are now openly charging Il Duce with his murder.

Only recently there were two street fights in which several hundred people took part. A student priest had attacked Balbo as the arch gangster. He had told a street corner gathering how at the insistence of Balbo a gang of Fascists in Ferrara had beaten Father Don Minzoni to death. The student priest recalled how Balbo, charged with the murder of Father Don Minzoni, was put on trial and at the hearing a letter written by him to his followers was produced in court. The letter told his following in Ferrara to use systematic clubbing in case the anti-Fascists failed to be persuaded by gentler methods. The student priest commented that this was in the early days of ideological gangsterism, when brutality was not yet the commonly accepted weapon of Il Duce's following.

Thereupon a score of Black Shirters attacked the student priest and his listeners. The battle raged for an hour and it looked as though every Roman policeman, or his equivalent, had disappeared into a side street. At the end the Black Shirters retreated with bleeding noses, bleeding eyes and torn shirts.

The other street brawl referred to was between a group of Communists and Fascists. In this battle many daggers and jackknives were used very effectively. And again the Black Shirters lost. They retreated with ugly wounds. And again no policeman was in sight.

Only a few months ago such incidents would have been impossible. But now one feels that Mussolini is losing his grip.

Two weeks ago a group of more than a hundred Arab students who were being trained in Rome to become fifth columnists when Italy invaded Egypt held a demonstration in front of Mussolini's private residence. They wanted to be returned to Egypt at once, they shouted. In this instance they were immediately dispersed. It is now being whispered that every one of the demonstrators has been imprisoned.

In Rome there are also several thousands of Moslem Albanians who in former days were shouting for Mussolini. But since the Italian defeat by the Greeks these Albanians have become loudly vocal in their scorn of Mussolini's Black Shirts. And the strange aspect of the whole situation is that the average Italian on the street is sympathetic with the disillusioned potential fifth columnists.

And of all the Italian anti-Fascists in Italy those Italians who have come to Italy in recent months from the United States are the most outspoken denouncers of Mussolini and his "vermin-laden Black Shirts," as they call them. These Italians from the United States are feared the most by the Black Shirts. They are now known here in Rome as the "Salvaminitas." (Salvamini is an Italian refugee professor, now teaching at Harvard.) They are looked upon by Italians as the anti-Mussolini Trojan Horses sent by American Italians to lead their countrymen in Italy in the coming revolt.

DANGERS IN SAFETY

LONDON —(OP) —Mr. Justice Malcolm Hilbery is not afraid of bombs, but of colds contracted in air raid shelters. "I think it is much more likely that we shall all die from colds, coming down into these refuge rooms, than from any bombs he remarked.

IN MONTREAL

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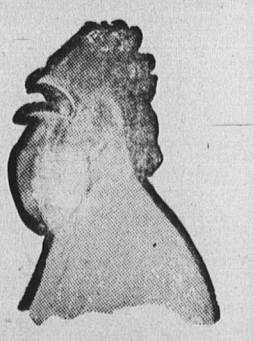

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